# Thousands of Israelis in Tel Aviv Protesting for Hostage Release Deal in Midst of Ongoing Conflict with Gaza



On June 3, tens of thousands of Israelis joined family members of hostages held in Gaza for a demonstration in Tel Aviv, demanding a hostage release deal. This protest occurred amidst a period of significant national distress as Israel's conflict with Hamas in Gaza neared its ninth month.

The situation in Israel has been marked by deep sadness and a pervasive sense of hopelessness among its citizens, exacerbated by the memory of a traumatic Hamas attack on October 7, which resulted in over 1,200 Israeli deaths and approximately 250 kidnappings. Currently, around 80 hostages are believed to still be alive in Gaza, prompting widespread public and familial displays of support and calls for their release.

Parallel to these public demands, Israel has been dealing with the significant strain on its defense forces. The country has seen the most extensive mobilization of its military reserves in history, with soldiers exhausted from constant deployments, while tensions with Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed militia in Lebanon, have added to the strain. Hezbollah’s continued missile attacks on northern Israel have led to the displacement of 60,000 Israelis.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently indicated that military operations against Hamas in Gaza are transitioning to less intensive, raid-based strategies, signaling a shift of focus to potential threats from Hezbollah in Lebanon. This development comes amid concerns about Hezbollah's significant military capabilities, which pose a more formidable threat compared to Hamas.

Adding to these complex dynamics, a recent Israeli airstrike in northern Gaza reportedly killed Zaher Haniyeh, the sister of Hamas’s political leader Ismail Haniyeh, along with her family. The Israeli military has not yet confirmed this strike. This incident is another chapter in the ongoing and severe humanitarian impact of the conflict on both Israelis and Palestinians.

The prolonged conflict and internal pressures have also triggered a resurgence of anti-government sentiments within Israel, resulting in near-weekly protests calling for various responses, including a ceasefire and hostage release. Despite the government's focus on military operations, a growing number of Israelis are questioning the effectiveness and long-term consequences of the continued conflict with Hamas and other militant groups.